NEWS RELEASE / COMMUNIQUÉ DE PRESSE

Editorial Communications Canada Limited

A subsidiary of The Creative Communications Group Limited

2065 Sun Life Building, Montreal 2, P.Q. — 861-9274

SUBJECT/SUJET: Real answers -- not platitudes, at 'no-nonsence' YMCA seminar

WORD COUNT/NOMBRE DE MOTS: 450

FOR/COMMUNIQUE AU NOM DE: YMCA of Montreal

FOR PUBLICATION/PUBLIABLE: After 5 p.m., Sunday, November 12, 1967

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Contemporary human problems and practical paths to solutions were searchingly examined and warmly discussed this weekend by some 250 participants in a two-day Montreal YMCA seminar.

The broadly representative group included high school and university students, heads of industry, youth workers, representatives of the professions and many who dubbed themselves "interested human beings".

All were Y volunteers or staff members. The National Council of Canadian YMCAs and regional boards were also well represented. Assembled into work groups, they shared the responsibility of charting a course for the Montreal YMCA.

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The seminar, held in the retreat setting of St. Jovite, Que., was called to formulate recommendations for ways to ensure the Y remains a vital and relevant association, with objectives and programs attuned to the times.

Basis for discussion was a far-ranging report on a 2½-year probe into the Y's policy, philosophy, purpose and goals. The report synthesizes the findings of one of the most comprehensive series of in-depth surveys ever carried out in Greater Montreal.

W.S. Kirkpatrick, head of the Montreal YMCA's Planning and Development Committee, set the mood for the assembly on Saturday morning, at the opening plenary session.

"The accelerated and unprecedented rate of change in the way of life of our communities is ushering in a new era of problems and opportunities," commented Mr. Kirkpatrick, who is also chairman and chief executive officer of Cominco.

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"How can the Montreal YMCA best serve the needs of the changing times? That's the question we will try to answer this weekend," he said.

"I suggest to each participant that he bear in mind that we can only get a consensus," he warned. However, he added; "This does not suggest for an instant that strong disagreement to a basic concept should not be vigorously voiced during the discussions."

R.G. Rogers, assistant general secretary of the Montreal YMCA, backed Mr. Kirkpatrick with another warning.

"Whatever we develop must be functional -- no platitudes will suffice," he declared. "If the YMCA is to be a relevant and effective social movement, it must involve itself more deeply with more of the affairs of the community."

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Current main concerns of the Y include: the widening communications gap between young people and adults; barriers between different ethnic groups and cultures; the effects of increasing urbanization and institutionalism; the impersonalization accompanying technological advances in our society.